

Oral History

of

DOT BAKER

**Chief, Contractor and General Services
Portland, Oregon**

August 9, 2015

**Oral History Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Conservation Training Center
Shepherdstown, West Virginia**

Oral History of Dot Baker

Interviewed by:
Jerry C. Grover



Date of Interview: August 9, 2015

Location of Interview: Tigard, Oregon

Interviewer(s): Jerry C. Grover

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 23

Colleagues: Jerry and Judy Grover, Don Weathers, Sam Buzbee, Barbara Winczewski, Barbara Whitesitt, Mike Bowen, Gloria Parrish, Lola Gannon

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions

Held: Clerk/Typist (GS 3) at Carson National Fish Hatchery, Clerk/Typist at Willard National Fish Hatchery, in the Portland Regional Office beginning as a property technician (GS-5). She worked in purchasing, finance, and contracting, eventually became GM-14 Chief, Division of Contracting and General Services for the Pacific Region of the Service.

Most Important Projects: As a contracting officer working on the Midway Island NWR clean-up Project in the property transfer from the U.S. Navy.

Brief Summary of Interview: Dot first started working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part-time Clerk/Typist at the Carson National Fish Hatchery, Carson, WA. Her husband Dick was a Field Engineer with the U.S. Forest Service Wind River station on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and they occupied excess hatchery housing. When they had to move from Carson National Fish Hatchery, she then worked at Willard National Fish Hatchery, also as a Clerk/Typist. When her husband was transferred to near Eugene, OR, she attended the University of Oregon and graduated with a degree in Business Administration. When her husband was again transferred, this time to the Forest Service office in Vancouver, WA., she applied for a vacancy in the Service's Portland Regional Office working as a property technician, then in purchasing,

and finally into contracting where eventually she would become the Chief, Division of Contracting and General Services. Her career promotions were from GS-3 Clerk typist to GS-14 Administrator.

She shares a couple stories of her time with the Fish and Wildlife Service, what type of work she did when she didn't work for the Service, and of people she worked with. She really enjoyed her time with the Service, but now that she's retired, she and her husband travel back and forth between Arizona and Washington homes. They have their two sons and grandson close by in Oregon & Washington.



Dot Baker, August 2015

THE INTERVIEW

Jerry: This is Jerry Grover, a retired Ecological Services & Fishery supervisor in the Portland Regional Office. I'm in my home in Tigard, Oregon, doing this oral history with Doteen Baker. Joining us today is Dot's husband Richard, and my wife, Judy, is also sitting in on this interview. The purpose of this interview is part of a program to preserve the history, heritage and culture of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the eyes of its employees. Dot, would you state your full name, place of birth for the record, and your birthday

Dot: I was born Doteen Marie Mundy in Washta, Iowa; March 1941.

Jerry: Is it Doteen or do you go by...?

Dot: It's Doteen, and I go by Dot.

Jerry: Dot, when you retired what was your grade, your job and when did you retiree.

Dot: I retired in 2003, I was a GS 14 in the Portland Regional Office. I was the Division Chief of Contracting and General Services when I retired. At that time Region 1 consisted of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, California, and Hawaii, Guam and the Trust Territories of the Pacific.

Jerry: Did you do fish and wildlife things in Iowa? What attracted you to an agency like the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Dot: I fished for catfish in Iowa in the Little Sioux River. But no, actually when I grew up we didn't have a lot of choices, being females. We could be a school teacher, a nurse, or a secretary and when I graduated from high school there was a new career, which was a dental hygienist. So I was a dental hygienist for approximately twenty years before I switched careers. How I actually became associated with the Fish and Wildlife Service is interesting; my husband was with the Forest Service and we moved to a remote station. It was remote for us because we lived in Beaverton, Oregon (a suburb of Portland) and we moved out

into the forest, 14 miles north of Carson, Washington.

Jerry: That would be the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (GP)?

Dot: That's correct. Dick was working for the GP, and the Forest Service rented some extra housing on the Carson National Fish Hatchery. That's how I ended up even knowing about fish hatcheries, just by living on a fish hatchery.

Jerry: How did we come to meet?

Dot: This is a funny story. We were living at the hatchery; let's see we moved there in 1971 and you came in '72?

Jerry: Correct

Dot: We had lived there approximately a year when you came as the manager of the hatchery. One of the very first things I remember, we were sitting on our big open area out in the hatchery, we were having a get together and drinking a beer and Oren Reynolds's dog came and lifted his leg on your leg or something.

Judy: On his back!

Dot:on his back, it was just like "OHHH!"
[Everyone laughing]

Jerry: Yes, I remember that. We arrived in June; it was absolutely one of those glorious western, in-the-Cascade- Mountain-best-summertime evenings and it was after work and we decided to have a beer and we just gathered up on the lawn and Oren's dog, Fido, and Fido peed on me. And poor Oren was our head hatcheryman; I mean he was just aghast that his dog peed on the new boss.

Dot: Everybody thought, "Oh, Oren's in real trouble now."

[Everyone laughing]

Jerry: So you're living on the hatchery, there's more into this and I think I can explain later on about the *Economy in Government Act* and how the Forest Service employees ended up renting quarters on a Fish and Wildlife Service hatchery. How did you get working for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Dot: There was a secretary there, her name was Karen Gladjo, her husband was a Forest Service employee and they were transferred and you were looking for another secretary. I thought I would be interested in that, so I took the Civil Service test and qualified as a Clerk-Typist and I got started there, it was a part-time job, and I really enjoyed it. I didn't ever think I would like office work, but I really did enjoy that work.

Jerry: What was the grade that I hired you?

Dot: Was it a GS-3?

Jerry: Yeah, 'cause they were pretty cheap in those days.

Dot: I don't know, it was fun. I just had to walk down the road from our house to my job, what three mornings a week; I don't even remember how many hours it was, but it was really nice.

Jerry: Yes, very convenient for us to be living there and to have a decent house. Of course in those days the Hatchery Manager was required to occupy the government quarters because of standby and things that happened after quitting hours until the next morning; a lot of things can happen on a fish hatchery and a lot of them are bad.

Dot: Do they not have to live on the hatchery anymore?

Jerry: They've lifted that, they've had to do other arrangements. Yeah, they ended up with a new ruling on that. But anyway, you're working for the Fish and Wildlife Service and then Dick gets transferred.

Dot: Well I think what happened is they took away the housing for us there.

Richard Baker: Yeah!

Dot: Because I remember Jim McBride, was also a Forest Service employee, but he ranked higher than Dick, so he and his family got the housing.

Jerry: Oh, I don't remember that. Okay this was a Forest Service thing.

Richard Baker: Because they dictated who lived in the hatchery housing.

Dot: Yes. And it was available when we moved up there, but then when then McBride's came, he was higher ranking or his job was more important than Dick's so he got the house, but there was housing available over at Willard National Fish Hatchery, where there was a Forest Service engineering center where Dick worked. That's how I ended up over at Willard.

Judy Grover: But weren't you working over there out of Willard National Fish Hatchery anyway?

Richard Baker: Yeah, some days I had to travel back and forth between the Wind River station at Carson and there.

Judy Grover: Okay, so it was easier for him.

Dot: It all worked fine because they needed a secretary over at Willard NFH.

Jerry: So your career continued?

Dot: Yes, not even a break; I think I just went from one to the other.

I should tell you something about Willard, which I thought was interesting. I worked for Manger Jim Holway there, and he said, "If you're working here, then you're going to have a raceway of fish." So he made me project the food for the fish, sample the fish, take care of a whole raceway of fish. Then the Little White Salmon River flooded and all that dirt comes in with the raceway water supply and he said, "That's your fish, you go clean the raceway." So I had to go out and clean the raceway too.

Jerry: So here was a clerk/typist doing hatcherymen, fish husbandry work.

[Everyone laughing]

Dot: Dick was transferred to the Willamette National Forest and I went back to dental hygiene for about eight years. When living in Eugene, home of the University of Oregon, I decided I wanted to get a college degree. I attended Lane Community College and the University of Oregon and ended up with a degree in business administration. I must have been fairly unusual because I was referred to as “the older woman in class.” When I finished my degree I thought I would like to go back and work for the government again, so Dick and I would have the same holidays.

Jerry: And then you ended up back, or Dick ended up transferred into the Vancouver Forest Service office, just across the river from Portland

Dot: I was fortunate enough to be hired in the Service’s regional office as a property technician but Dick was still in Eugene. I rented a room from a wonderful lady, Jo Jaspersen, who had a dog named Dexter. I drove from Eugene to Portland on Monday morning and did the return trip on Friday afternoon. I enjoyed telling everyone I lived with Jo and Dexter during the week and with Dick and Dan on weekends. After a year of that I was ready to resign when Dick was transferred back to Vancouver.

Jerry: That began the Portland Regional Office career. And what grade was that, Dot?

Dot: I think that was a GS 5, if I recall correctly. And that was in 1985.

Judy Grover: So we were in D.C.

Dot: Right because I remember you coming back in the Portland office.

Jerry: Okay and from there just you’re training for the contracting and you ended up in a series of jobs from property technician to be the head of CGS.

Dot: Right.

Jerry: That’s a pretty responsible position.

Dot: I just happened to be in the right place at the right time; I think I was very, very fortunate in the fact the Don Weathers liked me and obviously

thought I was competent. He was the head of administration.

Jerry: ARD for administration.

Dot: I was doing the moving of the people into the region when he came to Portland from D.C. I moved him into the region and I guess he liked his contacts with me. In property moving people was one of those “other duties as assigned.” Later that became a full time position. Something else just popped into my mind about my time in property. A new property tech was being hired and those of us working there asked our boss not to hire a smoker or make sure they couldn’t smoke at their desk as we were tired of breathing second hand smoke from a previous property tech. Isn’t it interesting how things have changed over the years.

I went into finance on a temporary assignment, working under Sam Buzbee, for a few months and that office was next to Don’s office so we had additional contact. I moved back to property, applied and received a purchasing position. In that position I was assigned for a couple weeks in Denver with purchasing agents and contracting officers from the other regions, putting together a purchasing manual for the FWS. After a few years in purchasing I applied and was selected for a contracting officer position. I was jumping around here and there, but I was always in administration.

Jerry: Okay. These people, all names that are institutions in the Portland Regional Office; these people all had successful careers.

Dot: Sam was there and Sue Jung; I think she’s still there, I’m not sure.

Judy Grover: I heard she was.

Dot: Great, great lady. I’m trying to think of who else. It’s interesting, you forget when you’ve been gone for so long. Barbara Winczewski, she lived out this way, do you every see her?

Judy Grover: Yes, occasionally and we’d greet her and, I think we saw her at Freddy’s and we’ve tried to get her to come to the luncheon, she won’t come, she just kind of avoids it; her husband died.

She's alone and whatever her life has done, I don't know.

Jerry: You being the support staff, you must have known a lot of the folks in there or everybody.

Dot: Let's see, when I started in property Alice Molinar was my boss. In purchasing, Barbara Whitesitt, was my boss. Mike Bowen was the head of contracting at that time. And then I think, how much can I say here?

Jerry: This is your interview.

Dot: Mike Bowen was the head of contracting but I think he and Don Weathers, the head of administration, had some kind of a personality conflict because while I was in purchasing Don Weathers demoted Mike Bowen and brought in Gloria Parrish from GSA. Gloria, she was a great boss. I'm just trying to remember all these people. Lola Gannon was there and she ran the show. Lola loved "her contractors" and most everyone else, but you didn't want to get on her bad side.

Richard Baker: Petey the Snake.

Dot: Yes, Lola always told her Petey the Snake story and everyone loved it.

Richard Baker: Dot says it the same way.

Dot: I do Petey the Snake and everyone thinks it's funny.

Jerry: I remember she had a lot of fun on that, and going away parties.

Richard Baker: Oh she did.

Jerry: While you were in there, in CGS, what were some of the big projects that you worked on, the things that usually everybody had to turn elbows on?

Richard Baker: Midway.

Dot: I was assigned the Midway Island Project. It was when the Government was doing base closures and the Navy was getting rid of Midway and the Fish and Wildlife was taking Midway over as part

of the Refuge System. I was the contracting officer and I had to go out to Midway with, I don't know if it was two or three different contractors that were interested in bidding on the job as part of the process of taking Midway over. There was also a gal from San Francisco who was interested in eco-tourism.

Jerry: Was this taking over, was this the clean-up process before we actually had it or did we have Midway at that time, because there was a lot of contaminants, old batteries from submarines and stuff you can't imagine that wasn't good for wildlife.

Dot: I don't know, I think we already had Midway. I was shocked to see all the metal garbage in that gorgeous water. I was told it was a huge Navy operation during the cold war and they had many towers with listening devices which were simply dropped in the ocean when they left. We went to Midway in a National Guard plane out of California which we boarded in Honolulu. We had to stop at Johnston Atoll with a delivery and then wait so the birds would be resting when we arrived on Midway after dark.

Stopping at Johnston Atoll was an experience. When we got out of the plane, we were told, "You go straight to the terminal, you don't wander around here." We looked out on the runway and there was a man on a jeep with a machine gun which we assumed was loaded. In the terminal we asked, "What's going on?" and were told, "They destroy chemical weapons here and you can't just wander around. Everybody that works here is carrying a gas mask in case of an emergency." That was true, we saw many people carrying gas masks, which gave me the chills. We stayed right at the terminal or we could step a few feet out but we couldn't wander around at all. That was a really shocking experience for me.

I didn't want to go to Midway, I was thinking of all kinds of reasons that I shouldn't go out there. Once I got out there, I didn't want to leave and I was hoping when the airplane took off for Honolulu that it would take some birds into the engine so we'd have to wait another week, but that didn't happen. I believe that was the very best experience of my whole career.

Judy Grover: I can remember telling her, “You go, and you enjoy that.” I was so jealous.

Jerry: Did they have a new gathering spot, Captain Brooks, the restaurant/bar?

Dot: No.

Jerry: Did they have the cafeteria where you eat or was it at the old Navy dinning room?

Dot: We were in the old Navy places, with Sri Lankans running the mess hall. Everything was curried, and anytime they fixed meat it was like shoe leather. The curried food wasn’t the greatest, but it was still a wonderful experience.

Jerry: How long were you out there?

Dot: Just a week; I wish it could have been longer.

Jerry: Were there any repeat trips?

Dot: No, I’ve never been back. Ken, his last name escapes me, was a manager out there.

Jerry: Manager on.....on site?

Dot: Yes. At Midway.

Dot: Ken, I thought I’d remember his name forever; really nice young man. We would sit and discuss things such as, “We don’t want to end up on *Time* magazine’s front cover.” We worried we would do something wrong, or the media would think it was wrong and we would end up as big news. We checked things over many times before that contract was ever issued.

Jerry: Were there other big moments or big projects that you worked on?

Dot: One of my funniest experiences when I first became contracting officer, we put in a new fish raceway out at Warm Springs Hatchery. The contractor didn’t do a very good job, and we were having a meeting about it. Chuck Weiss was the engineer, I was the contracting officer and the foreman for the contractor was obviously new. He had a really strange smarty attitude and I was new as a contracting officer. He made some smarty remark and I off handedly said, “Well we could just have you tear it out and do it over again.” He

said, “Oh, we can do that.” I was just dumbfounded, I didn’t know what to say except to keep my mouth shut because I thought if he’s dumb enough to do that then let him.

Jerry: What was the issue?

Dot: The raceway was not done nice and smooth, it was just bad; the concrete was not a good job, but it was something that could have been fixed. Chuck and I had talked about it as something that could have been fixed but then the foreman offered to tear it out and redo it.

Jerry: And you paused?

Dot: Yes, Chuck and I just sat there and kept our mouths shut and let him redo the job. I thought he probably didn’t have a job with that contractor very long.

Jerry: And we ended up, the government ended up with a satisfactory product?

Dot: I don’t remember any problems after that but I was just flabbergasted that he would volunteer to rip it out when it could be fixed.

Jerry: Okay dealing with the people, you were in a pretty big office there was like, what 300 folks in the regional office in total; I think a third of them were probably ES folks that were biologists. In the admin section, did you run across Jerry Van Meter?

Dot: Jerry Van Meter, he was gone pretty much; wasn’t he before Don Weathers?

Judy Grover: Yes.

Dot: When they brought Don Weathers in, Jerry was pushed aside to some other position. He was an administrator when I first came on board but I was so new to everything I don’t remember anything about him other than he would give out these little badges and everybody laughed about it; whatever the little badges were.

Jerry: They were “Attaboys”.

Dot: Is that what it was? I don’t remember, I was only there possibly a year when he had that

administration job and I didn't have any contact with him.

Jerry: Other folks in the regional office that you deal, you have any memories, fond or otherwise, but memories nonetheless?

Dot: My best memory is going for a walk with Judy every day for how many years, fifteen?

Judy Grover: I don't know how many years, but I miss them.

Dot: I know, every lunch hour we would go for a walk and it would be raining and people saying, "Are you going out in that rain?" We would look at them and say, "We haven't shrunk yet."

Jerry: This was your lunchtime break, you'd walk half your lunch hour away and then the other half walk back.

Dot: What would we do, grab our lunch I guess...

Judy Grover: I brought my lunch...

Dot: ...you always ate an apple.

Judy Grover: I would eat it at my desk before we left.

Dot: Maybe that's what I did but I know the lunch hour was all; 45 minute walk through the...

Judy Grover: Yeah, through the neighborhood.

Richard Baker: You guys went quite a ways.

Dot: Walk, talk, and see the old Portland houses; there were some big, old beautiful houses around the Lloyd Center. That was the best part; and a way to blow off steam too.

Judy Grover: It was good for us.

Jerry: In your opinion, dealing with the people that you had to deal, the Regional Director's Office, contracting, and their programs. How, in your opinion, how was the Service doing at that time?

Dot: I loved it; I just thought we were doing a wonderful job; I liked all the people I worked with. It was so refreshing after working in a dental office, and one of the best things coming to a job like that is you didn't get hassled. That maybe sounds strange, but working in a dental office, I worked in several of them and there was only one dentist, that didn't do all the sexual innuendos. It was so refreshing to be at the Fish and Wildlife Service where you didn't get any of that. I guess people took the rules to heart and lived by them, so it was really, really nice to work in a position like that.

Jerry: One of the comments I've heard when I was in the Regional Office about contracting officers, "It must be the near dumbest people in the world; they were always in training."

Dot: (Chuckles) We did. We did lots and lots of training.

Jerry: To keep your warrants up?

Dot: Yes, it was continual; you had to do this and you had to do that and you had to do something else. I don't know how much I was gone when I first became a contracting officer taking one class after another. It seems like I just get home and I'd have to go and take another class.

Jerry: These are all required?

Dot: Required, definitely required that we had to do.

Jerry: In your opinion, was that overkill to do your job?

Dot: I think it was too much all at once, we would have been better off if it was spread out some because I couldn't even absorb and apply it before I had to get some more training. I think it would have been better if they would have not piled it on so fast.

Jerry: But nonetheless required, but was the government still getting its nickel's worth out of that kind of training, it made a better person, a better contracting officer out of you, federal employee?

Dot: Oh definitely! You know there was a lot of things you didn't want to step your foot in, you'd need to have that training otherwise you'd get in big trouble. I remember one of the things we were told was to always document everything. I can't remember even what contract it was, but I had documented, documented, documented, and a lawsuit or some difference of opinion came up and one of the lawyers looked at my notes and said, "Where did all this come from?" I said, "Well that's what they told me to do." Dates, times, and notes were there, I think it was pretty unusual for the lawyer to see all that I had documented.

Jerry: Was it our Solicitor's Office, or was it the outside lawyer?

Dot: It was our Solicitor's Office, so he had all the backup, the dates and the times and everything that had happened from my point of view.

Jerry: In your working there with Don Weathers, he always had a kind of a hard-nosed reputation, that he was slightly anal retentive, how was your relationship? He hired you.

Dot: Yes, and I feel like the only reason I got the job is because Don liked me and he thought I could do a good job. Don and I had a great relationship until I became head of Contracting and General Services and then I never could figure out what he wanted. I'm still confused about it because he wanted to tell me how to do my job. He wouldn't let me do the job, he would tell me to do things that I knew that I shouldn't do, that I didn't want to do. It wasn't breaking the law but it was maybe he didn't like some employee and something that they did, so he wanted me to do something about it. Well I saw that employee in an entirely different light because I worked with them every day.

Jerry: This is a person on your staff or within the section?

Dot: Yes, it was somebody on my staff. I saw them in a different light, and Don would not listen to that. He had his mind made up. I would come back to my office and tell Joyce Martin, the person at the head of General Services,

"I have to do this, it's the wrong thing to do." I said, "I've got to do it, I've just got to figure out a

way to do it." It was so frustrating for me. I felt bad because I never could get the right relationship with Don once I was head of Contracting and General Services. I don't know why, and to this day I don't know why.

Jerry: Sounds like he was trying to run your division.

Dot: Yes, he did. Now that I step back from it, I see that he would pick younger people or people that he thought he could control; that's the only thing I can figure out. He was very controlling and I found it frustrating that he wouldn't even listen to what I wanted to say about my employees or what my opinion was; he would not listen at all.

And one of the things that really upset me, we were doing a move and GSA, the head of GSA of the moving part, he was a horrible man, not people under him, they were really easy to work with. But he was terrible and...

Jerry: The boss guy?

Dot: Yes. I walked into Don's office one day and I said something trying to explain to Don what the situation was, he would not listen at all. He pretty much told me I was a liar, I didn't know what I was talking about. It wasn't too long after that and the guy was out of GSA because of some of the things he did; but Don never came and said, "Hmm, guess you were right." So anyway, it was very, very frustrating working for Don when I was directly under him.

Richard Baker: There's nothing I could do, it's just something she had to deal with.

Jerry: Now we're kind of just getting to the point of, let's wind this up. You're retirement, you had a story that you were telling me a minute ago about when you came back to the Service.

Dot: Oh, that's right. When I began work as a clerk/typist out at the fish hatcheries, I was under the CSRS retirement system. When I came back to the government in '85 that retirement system was not available to me but they offered something called the Offset or the Thrift Savings Plan, is that right Jerry?

Jerry: Yes.

Dot: They provided me lots of literature to read through to decide which option I wanted to select. The more I went through the literature, videos and whatever they gave me, the more confused I became, but they kept pushing the Thrift Savings Plan but I decided I should take the Offset and I have certainly not regretted that decision.

Jerry: So retirement has been good for you and Richard, now you've both...

Dot: Retirement had been wonderful. When I first retired, I loved my job, and so the first thing we did, within a week after I retired, we took off in our fifth wheel and traveled across the United States for about three months. That was the best thing for me to get away from it because I really enjoyed going to work and enjoyed the people and so I needed to just make a nice, clean break like that. Then we started to go to Arizona in the winter, and now we spend about six months in Arizona in the winter, and six months back in Washington.

Jerry: And your children?

Dot: Both of our sons live within about sixteen miles of us; one lives in Vancouver, Washington, and the other lives in Portland, Oregon. We have a good life.